

IN THE CLAIMS:

Please amend the claims as shown below. The claims, as pending in the subject application, read as follows:

1. (Currently Amended) An image input apparatus comprising:

connecting means for locally connecting a key storage device to the image input apparatus;

generating means for generating a digital image in the image input apparatus;

reading means for reading an encryption key stored in ~~an external source~~ the key storage device connected to the connecting means;

storage means for storing, in the image input apparatus, said read encryption key to execute an encryption process;

encryption means for encrypting the generated digital image information with said encryption key stored in the storage means;

output means for outputting the encrypted digital information image to a memory in the image input apparatus;

erasing means for erasing said encryption key stored in said storage means after encrypting the digital information image by said encryption means;

input means for inputting digital information encrypted with said encryption key stored in said external source;

obtaining means for obtaining, from said ~~external source~~ key storage device, a decryption key corresponding to said encryption key; and

decryption means for decrypting the ~~input~~ stored encrypted digital ~~information~~ image by using said decryption key obtained by said obtaining means.

2. (Currently Amended) An image input apparatus according to claim 1, wherein said encryption means encrypts the digital image ~~information~~ which has undergone a high-efficiency coding operation.

3. (Original) An image input apparatus according to claim 1, further comprising image pick-up means for optically picking up an image of a subject and for generating an image signal from the picked-up image.

4. and 5. (Canceled)

6. (Original) An image input apparatus according to claim 1, wherein said encryption key comprises an encryption key based on a common key cryptosystem.

7. (Original) An image input apparatus according to claim 1, wherein said encryption key comprises an encryption key based on a public key cryptosystem.

8. and 9. (Canceled)

10. (Currently Amended) An image input method for an image input apparatus, comprising the steps of:

locally connecting a key storage device to the image input apparatus;

generating a digital image in the image input apparatus;
reading an encryption key stored in ~~an external source~~ the key storage
device connected to the image input apparatus;
storing, in a storage means of the image input apparatus, said read
encryption key ~~in a storage means~~ to execute an encryption process;
encrypting the generated digital image information with said encryption key
stored in the storage means;
outputting the encrypted digital ~~information~~ image to a memory in the
image input apparatus;
erasing said stored encryption key after encrypting the digital ~~information~~
image by the encrypting step;
~~inputting digital information encrypted with said encryption key stored in~~
~~said external source;~~
obtaining, from said ~~external source~~ key storage device, a decryption key
corresponding to said encryption key; and
decrypting the ~~input~~ stored encrypted digital ~~information~~ image by using
said decryption key obtained in the obtaining step.

11. (Currently Amended) An image input method according to claim 10,
wherein the digital ~~information~~ image which has undergone a high-efficiency coding
operation is encrypted.

12. (Currently Amended) An image input method according to claim 10, wherein an image signal is generated from an optically picked up image of a subject which is converted into the digital information image.

13. (Original) An image input method according to claim 10, wherein said encryption key comprises an encryption key based on one of a common key cryptosystem and a public key cryptosystem.

14. (Currently Amended) An encryption processing program stored in a computer-readable medium, the program to be executed by an image input apparatus, comprising:

a step of locally connecting a key storage device to the image input apparatus;

a step of generating a digital image in the image input apparatus;

a step of reading an encryption key stored in an external source the key storage device connected to the image input apparatus;

a step of storing, in a storage means of the image input apparatus, said read encryption key in a storage means to execute an encryption process;

a step of encrypting the generated digital information image with said encryption key stored in the storage means;

a step of outputting the encrypted digital information image to a memory in the image input apparatus;

a step of erasing the stored encryption key after the step of encrypting the digital information image;

~~a step of inputting digital information encrypted with said encryption key stored in said external source;~~

a step of obtaining, from said ~~external source~~ key storage device, a decryption key corresponding to said encryption key; and

a step of decrypting said ~~input encrypted digital information~~ image by using said decryption key obtained in the obtaining step.

15. to 17. (Canceled)

18. (Currently Amended) An image input apparatus comprising:

connecting means for locally connecting a key storage device to the image input apparatus;

image generating means for generating a digital image in the image input apparatus;

key generating means for generating an internal key;

information image encryption means for encrypting the generated digital information image with said internal key;

reading means for reading an ~~external~~ encryption key stored in ~~an external source~~ the key storage device connected to the image input apparatus;

storage means for storing, in the image input apparatus, said ~~external read~~ encryption key to execute a key encryption process;

key encryption means for encrypting said internal key with said ~~external read~~ encryption key stored in said storage means;

output means for outputting the encrypted digital ~~information~~ image and the encrypted internal key to a memory in the image input apparatus;

erasing means for erasing said ~~external~~ read encryption key stored in the storage means and said internal key after executing said encryption process by said image information encryption means and said key encryption means;

~~input means for inputting encrypted digital information and an encrypted internal key~~;

obtaining means for obtaining, from said key storage device, ~~an external a~~ decryption key corresponding to said ~~external~~ read encryption key stored in said ~~external source~~ key storage device;

key decryption means for decrypting said ~~input~~ encrypted internal key with said obtained ~~external~~ decryption key; and

decryption means for decrypting said ~~input~~ encrypted digital ~~information~~ image with said internal key decrypted by said key decryption means.

19. (Currently Amended) An image input apparatus according to claim 18, wherein said internal encryption key comprises an encryption key based on a common key cryptosystem, and said ~~external~~ read encryption key comprises an encryption key based on a public key cryptosystem.

20. (Currently Amended) An image input method for an image input apparatus comprising the steps of:

locally connecting a key storage device to the image input apparatus;

generating a digital image in the image input apparatus;

generating an internal key;

encrypting the generated digital ~~information~~ image with said generated internal key;

reading an ~~external~~ encryption key stored in ~~an external source~~ the key storage device connected in the connecting step;

storing said ~~external~~ read encryption key in a storage means in the image input apparatus to execute a key encryption process;

key encrypting said internal key with said ~~external~~ read encryption key stored in said storage means;

outputting the encrypted digital ~~information~~ image and the encrypted internal key to a memory in the image input apparatus;

erasing the ~~external~~ read encryption key stored in the storage means and said internal key after executing said encrypting step by said ~~information~~ image encrypting step and the key encrypting step;

~~inputting encrypted digital information and an encrypted internal key;~~

obtaining, from said key storage device, ~~an external~~ a decryption key corresponding to said ~~external~~ read encryption key ~~stored in said external source~~;

key decrypting said ~~input~~ encrypted internal key with said obtained ~~external~~ decryption key; and

decrypting said encrypted digital ~~information~~ image with said internal key decrypted by the key decrypting step.

21. (Canceled)

22. (Currently Amended) An encryption processing program stored in a computer-readable medium, the program to be executed by an image input apparatus, comprising the steps of:

a step of locally connecting a key storage device to the image input apparatus;

a step of generating a digital image in the image input apparatus;

a step of generating an internal key;

a step of encrypting the generated digital information image with said internal key;

a step of reading an ~~external~~ encryption key stored in ~~an external source~~ the key storage device connected in the connecting step;

a step of storing said ~~external read~~ encryption key in a storage means in the image input apparatus to execute a key encryption process;

a step of key encrypting said internal key with said ~~external read~~ encryption key stored in said storage means;

a step of outputting the encrypted digital ~~information image~~ and the encrypted internal key to a memory in the image input apparatus;

a step of erasing the ~~external read~~ encryption key stored in the storage means and the internal key after executing the encrypting step by the digital ~~information image~~ encrypting step and the key encrypting step;

~~a step of inputting encrypted digital information and an encrypted internal key;~~

a step of obtaining, from the key storage device, ~~an external~~ a decryption key corresponding to the ~~external read~~ encryption key ~~stored in the external source;~~

a step of key decrypting said ~~input~~ encrypted internal key with said obtained external decryption key; and

a step of decrypting said ~~input~~ encrypted digital ~~information~~ image with said internal key decrypted by the key decrypting step.

23. (Currently Amended) An image input apparatus according to Claim 1, wherein the ~~external source~~ key storage device comprises an integrated circuit card removably connectable to the image input apparatus and the encryption and decryption keys are stored in the integrated circuit card.

24. (Currently Amended) An image input method according to Claim 10, wherein the ~~external source~~ key storage device comprises a removably connectable integrated circuit card and the encryption and decryption keys are stored in the integrated circuit card.

25. (Currently Amended) An encryption processing program according to Claim 14, wherein the ~~external source~~ key storage device comprises a removably connectable integrated circuit card and the encryption and decryption keys are stored in the integrated circuit card.

26. (Currently Amended) An image input apparatus according to Claim 18, wherein the ~~external source~~ key storage device comprises an integrated circuit card removably connectable to the image input apparatus and the encryption and decryption keys are stored in the integrated circuit card.

27. (Currently Amended) An image input method according to Claim 20, wherein the ~~external source~~ key storage device comprises a removably connectable integrated circuit card and the encryption and decryption keys are stored in the integrated circuit card.

28. (Currently Amended) An encryption processing program according to Claim 22, wherein the ~~external source~~ key storage device comprises a removably connectable integrated circuit card and the encryption and decryption keys are stored in the integrated circuit card.